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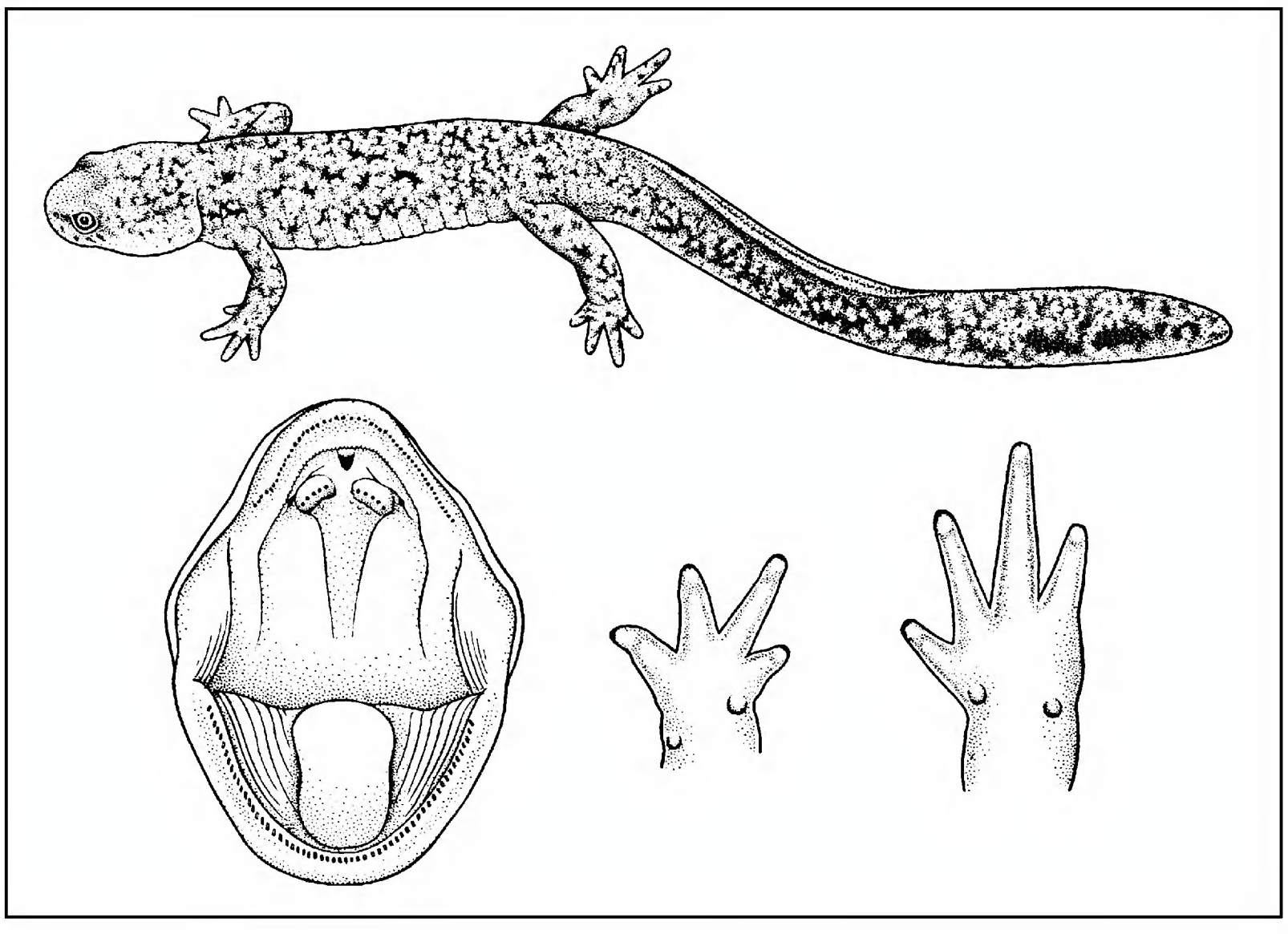

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Notes on Mexican Herpetofauna 10: The Herpetofauna of Three Plant Communities in the Sierra de Picachos, Nuevo León, Mexico

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Abstract

The Sierra de Picachos is a natural protected area separated from the Sierra Madre Oriental mountain mass by about 60 km; this feature makes the area an important site for floristic and faunistic studies. Our objectives were to: 1) update the herpetofauna inventory, and 2) determine the distribution of each species with regard to vegetation community and altitude range. Twelve field trips were conducted during 2005 and at the beginning of 2006; each trip lasted 2 to 4 days. Our herpetological survey was focused mainly on submontane matorral [shrub forest], oak forest and the transition zone between. We observed a total of 208 individual amphibians and reptiles. Ecological distribution of species was: 30 species in the submontane matorral, 15 species in the matorral-oak forest transition zone, and 7 species in the oak forest. According to literature citations the natural protected area of Sierra de Picachos harbors 47 species. In this survey we found 33 of those species representing 15 families and 23 genera.

Introduction

The herpetofauna of mountainous areas in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico, has increased since the establishment of national and state protected areas (Anonymous, 2000; Arriaga et al., 2000). Some of these areas that have been surveyed for herpetofauna are: Parque Ecológico Chipinque in the Sierra Madre (Banda, 2002; Lazcano et al., 2006a); Sierra San Antonio Peña Nevada (Lazcano et al., 2004); Sierra Cerro de la Silla (Gallardo-Valdez, 2006).

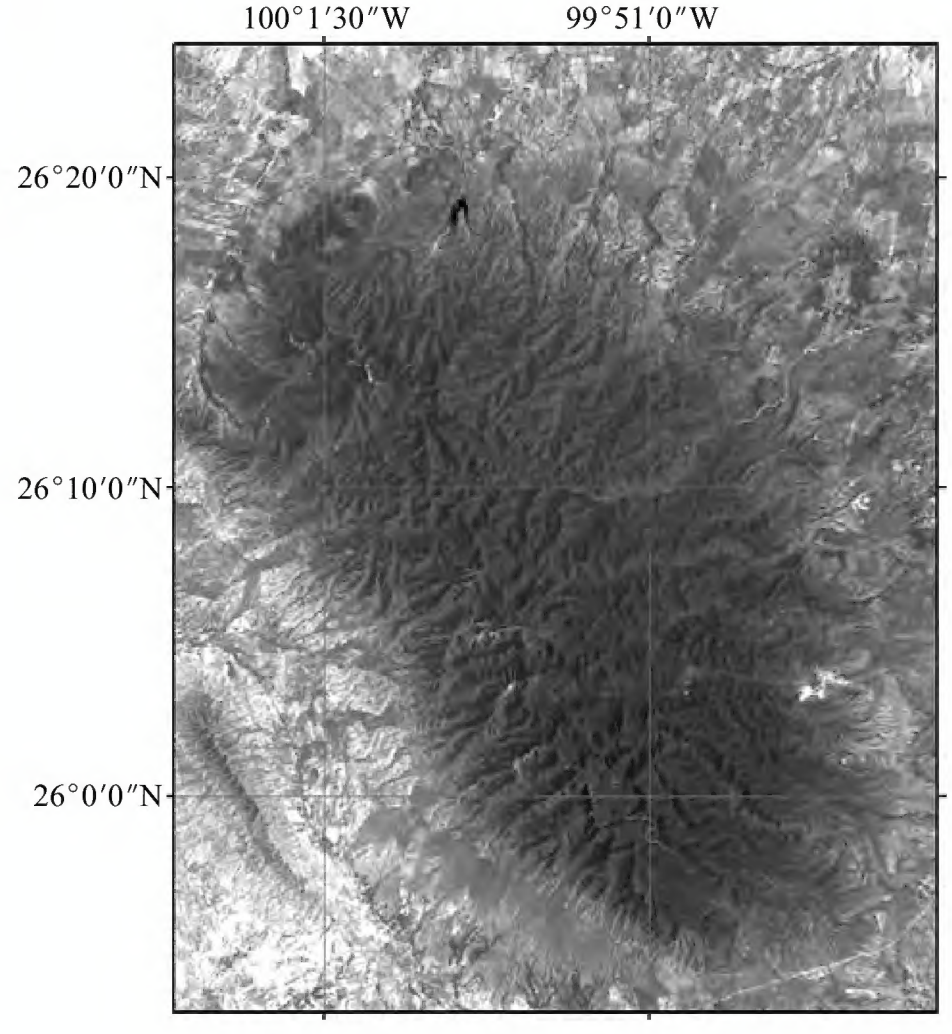
However, until now there had been no herpetological survey or inventory of the Sierra de Picachos. This study undertook such a survey, noting plant associations and altitude ranges. This information will contribute significantly to the herpetological knowledge of this particular northeast area of the state, plus help to establish better conservation and management practices of vertebrates with private owners and the government office that regulates activities in state natural protected areas.

Physical and biological characteristics, along with its geographic location make Sierra de Picachos in Nuevo León, Mexico, an area considered a biogeographic insular habitat. It is isolated from the Sierra Madre Oriental, making it an ecological corridor for a diverse variety of migrating birds and mammals. Considering it of biological and ecological relevance, the state established this natural protected area in 2000 along with 22 other areas (Anonymous, 2000).

Nevertheless, as with many mountainous areas of Nuevo León, the area has been subject to intensive anthropogenic activities such as agriculture, forestry and grazing. Such activities have changed biological characteristics or structure to a large extent throughout the state. Fortunately, up to now in this sierra the area considered as protected is in prime condition; fragmentation of the habitat is still not obvious or evidenced, except for a few pathways or trails. In addition, private land owners have set up their own biological richness conservation programs; this guarantees that many areas will see efforts for improved conservation and management practices (González-Iglesias, 2001). (The protected area includes both private and government-owned properties).

Materials and Methods

The Sierra de Picachos physiographically forms part of the Sierra Madre Oriental that is included in the Gulf Coastal Plain province, within Nuevo León, in northeastern Mexico. Geographic location is given by CONABIO (Arriaga et al., 2000): latitude 25°50′55″N to 26°19′22″N; longitude 99°42′57″W to 100°06′40″W. This represents a surface area of 33.602 km^2.

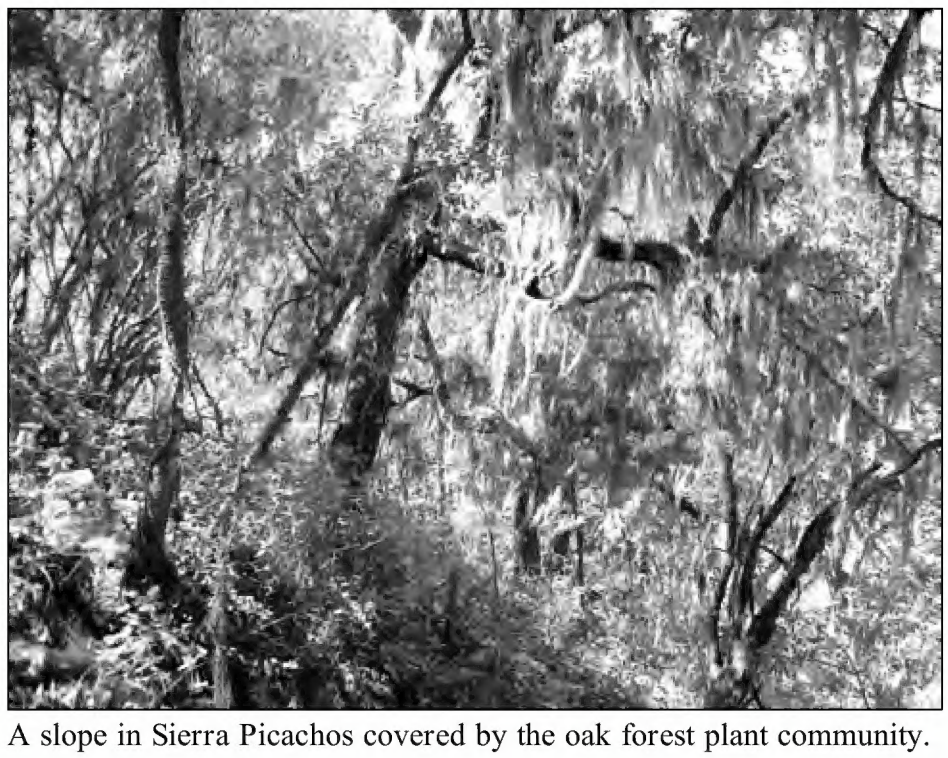


Submontane matorral plant community along an arroyo.

A slope in Sierra Picachos covered by a section of a transition community between matorral and oak forest.

Climate in the area is classified as temperate, with semi-tropical and subhumid areas, rainfall predominantly in the summer and 5 to 12% of rains in the winter (INEGI, 1978; García, 2004). The annual median temperature is over 18°C; coldest month temperatures fluctuate between -3° and 18°C.

Various plant communities occur in the Sierra de Picachos. At lower altitudes (450–750 m) submontane matorral [shrub forest] is widely distributed. From 700 to 900 m oak–pine forests are present; from 900 to 1200 m the plant community is pine–oak forest; and in the higher reaches of the sierra (1200 m and up) pine forest dominates. The diversity of plant communities present gives the herpetofauna here an enormous variety of habitats to colonize or use. The dominant plant species in the pine forest is *Pinus pseudostrobus*, a typical species also present in other northeastern mountain areas. It may be associated with *Pinus pseudostrobus* var *apulcensis* and *P. arizonica.* This sierra's oak forest is made up of the following oak species: *Quercus canbyi*, *Q. laceyii*, *Q. fusiformis*, *Q. polymorpha*, *Q. treculeana* and *Q. rysophyla.* As mentioned previously the most widely distributed plant community in the Sierra de Picachos is submontane matorral. This plant community is also known in Spanish as *barretal* because it is dominated by the plant species barreta (*Helietta parvifolia*). Throughout its range this dominating species is frequently seen associated with other species such as anacahuita (*Cordia boissieri*) and chaparro prieto (*Acacia rigidula*).



A slope in Sierra Picachos covered by the oak forest plant community.

The three plant communities involved in this study were determined using INEGI (1978a–r) maps. These were submontane matorral, oak forest and the matorral–oak forest transition zone. Pine forest sampling was excluded from this study because it was inaccessible to us. Twelve 2- to 4-day trips were conducted from February of 2005 to March of 2006, investing a total of 10 searching hours per day (900 to 1400 h and 1500 to 2000 h). We used the Campbell and Christman (1982) search method, that consisted in locating and capturing specimens in the substrate they were using (rocks or rock piles, dry tree trunks, live plant substrates, under leaf litter, under any artificial cover objects, in mud ponds or other water bodies, etc.).

Specimens were captured using snake hooks, leather gloves and forceps; they were transported in labeled cloth bags. Each collected specimen was given an identification number and a field collecting sheet was filled in. When possible specimens and habitat were photographed. For each collected specimen the following data was taken: species, date, collecting hour, altitude, plant community, active or nonactive, substrate, ambient humidity and temperature, condition of the day.

Specimens were identified using Smith and Taylor (1945, 1948, 1950), Conant and Collins (1998) and accounts from the Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles published by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. In particular the phrynosomatid genus–species groups for Nuevo León and Tamaulipas were identified using special elaborated keys by Dr. Hobart Smith and personnel of our lab.

Results

Summarizing all our collected material, a total of 33 species were observed in the Sierra de Picachos, distributed taxonomically as follows: Amphibians: Anura (5 families, 5 genera and 7 species). Reptiles: Sauria (6 families, 7 genera and 14 species); Serpentes (2 families, 9 genera and 10 species); Testudines (2 families, 2 genera and 2 species).

Nine of the species found are in the Mexican NOM-059-ECOL-2001 (Anonymous, 2001) and are considered threatened or in need of special protection. These are: *Coleonyx brevis, Gerrhonotus infernalis, Sceloporus grammicus, Trachemys scripta* and *Lithobates (Rana) berlandieri*, *Cophosaurus texanus, Tantilla atriceps, Thamnophis proximus,* and *Gopherus berlandieri.*

Phrynosomatid lizards were the most frequently observed group. Two species were most abundant: *Sceloporus cyanogenys* and *S. grammicus disparilis*, both with strong diurnal activity.

The most frequently seen frog species was *Lithobates (Rana) berlandieri*; its activity was always crepuscular or nocturnal, associated with water bodies like ponds and cattle tanks.

Table 1 lists the species we found in the Sierra de Picachos, showing distribution in plant communities and altitude range as well as status in the Norma Oficial Mexicana (NOM-059-ECOL-2001) (Anonymous, 2001).

Discussion

We encountered the greatest herpetofaunal diversity in the

Table 1. For each species found during the study, its status in the Norma Oficial Mexicana (NOM-059-ECOL-2001), plant communities where found and altitude range in which found. Status codes: A = Threatened; Pr = Special Protection; SE = Without Status. Scientific names based on Crother et al. (2003), Flores-Villela and Canseco-Márquez (2004) and Frost et al. (2006).

Species	Status	Plant Community			Altitude min–max (m)
		Submontane matorral	Transition	Oak forest	
Amphibia: Anura					
Anaxyrus punctatus	SE	16	4		314–971
Chaunus marinus	SE	4	1		323–647
Cranopsis nebulifer	SE	9	6	1	341–1181
Smilisca baudinii	SE	7			402
Syrrophus cystignathoides campi	SE	3	5	1	315–756
Hypopachus variolosus	SE	1			385
Lithobates berlandieri	Pr	13	5		323–1213
Reptilia: Sauria					
Gerrhonotus infernalis	Pr			2	1298–1341
Coleonyx brevis	Pr	4			341–1156
Hemidactylus turcicus turcicus	SE	1			371
Aspidoscelis gularis gularis	SE	2	1		330–671
Cophosaurus texanus scitulus	A	6			447–755
Sceloporus couchii	SE	4	3	2	714–1213
Sceloporus cyanogenys	SE	11	4		264–1204
Sceloporus grammicus disparilis	Pr	5	7		419–1421
Sceloporus marmoratus	SE	5			393–479
Sceloporus olivaceus	SE	4	2		402–1311
Sceloporus parvus parvus	SE	8	7	1	459–1281
Sceloporus poinsettii poinsettii	SE	11	6		754–1300
Plestiodon brevirostris pineus	SE	1	4	3	1192–1316
Plestiodon tetragrammus brevilineatus	SE	3	3		402–1207
Reptilia: Serpentes					
Drymarchon melanurus erebennus	SE	1			388
Leptodeira septentrionalis septentrionalis	SE	1			371
Masticophis schotti schotti	SE	4			549–794
Pantherophis emoryi	SE	2			264
Pantherophis bairdi	SE		1		1198
Storeria dekayi texana	SE			3	756–1341
Tantilla atriceps	A	2			436–1156
Thamnophis proximus diabolicus	A	2			323–325
Trimorphodon tau tau	SE	1			435
Leptotyphlops dulcis myopicus	SE	1			1150
Reptilia: Chelonia					
Trachemys scripta elegans	Pr	2			323–328
Gopherus berlandieri	A	2			278–293

Sceloporus poinsettii poinsettii, a species found in rocky, open areas of the submontane matorral plant community.

Sceloporus cyanogenys, a species found throughout open areas of the submontane matorral plant community.

submontane matorral plant community. Twenty-nine species were found there: 7 anurans, 12 lizards, 8 snakes and 2 turtles. In the transition zone between matorral and oak forest 15 species were found: 5 anurans, 9 lizards and one serpent. In the oak forest only 7 species were found: 2 anurans, 4 lizards and one snake. The possibility of finding these 29 species in the area was known from previously published distribution maps (Behler and King, 1992; Dixon and Werler, 2005; Canseco-Márquez et al., 2004; Castañeda-G. et al., 2004; Conant and Collins, 1998; Köhler and Heimes, 2002; Werler and Dixon, 2000). Our survey confirmed the presence of these species for the area. Colubrid snakes were probably underrepresented in our survey due to their crepuscular and nocturnal habits. The pine forest community was not sampled because it was extremely difficult to access.

The known herpetofauna of the Sierra Madre Oriental comprises 207 species. This total includes 20 salamander species (in 2 families and 4 genera), 44 anuran species (6 families and 14 genera), 49 lizard species (12 families and 20 genera), 88 snake species (5 families and 48 genera), and 6 turtle species (2 families and 3 genera) (Canseco-Márquez et al., 2004).

Recent herpetological studies for Nuevo León mountain areas have reported the following species numbers: for Parque Ecológico Chipinque in Garza García (Lazcano et al., 2006a) 45 species; for the natural protected area of San Juan y Puentes in Aramberri (Lazcano et al., 2007) 45 species; in the natural protected area Sierra Cerro la Silla in Cadereyta-Jiménez (Gallardo-Valdez, 2006) 43 species; and for Sierra San Antonio Peña Nevada in the municipality of Zaragoza (Lazcano et al., 2004) 32 species (this area is in the process of converting into a legal state and national natural protected area).

The herpetofauna of the state of Nuevo León, based on literature and preserved collections, comprises 125 species (Anonymous, 2000; Contreras-Balderas et al., 1995). In this study we registered 33 species for Sierra de Picachos, which represents 26% of the total herpetofauna known for the state. Based on literature range maps 47 species may occur in the Sierra Picachos area (Anonymous, 2000; Contreras-Balderas et al., 1995), but no collecting or sampling has previously been conducted here.

We hope to continue studying the herpetofauna of the Sierra de Picachos protected area. We expect to add to our species list by surveying other plant communities and by looking in other weather conditions, other seasons, and at other times of day. At the end of our study intense rains explosively increased the number of water bodies in the area. Afterwards, we added another species to the list—*Scaphiopus couchii,* a member of the family Scaphiopodidae.

In addition to compiling a species list, we contributed two natural history notes for the species found here: saurophagy by *Sceloporus couchii* on a juvenile *Sceloporus poinsettii poinsettii* (Lazcano et al., 2006b); and predation by a *Trimorphodon tau tau* on an adult male *Sceloporus cyanogenys* (Contreras-Lozano et al., 2007).

Smilisca baudinii, a species found near artificial water bodies such as cattle tanks in the submontane matorral plant community.

Gopherus berlandieri, one of the lowland inhabitants of the submontane matorral.

The species we found in this survey are also found in other mountainous areas of the state; no endemic species has so far been found in this insular sierra habitat. However, local inhabitants speak of finding in the pine forest plant community a type of legless lizard. Unfortunately, no specimens were collected, leaving us puzzled as to what this mysterious lizard could be.

And in the municipalities to the south there still exist mountainous areas in Nuevo León that haven't been studied, like Galeana and Iturbide, well known areas for collecting *Lampropeltis mexicana* in the past by North American herpetologists.

Acknowledgments

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Herpetological Representations on Silver Art Bars

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Although Americans have been able to purchase silver bullion ever since mining of that metal became common in the west, many new bullion products appeared following the demonetization of silver in 1964 and the abandonment of the gold standard (begun by F. D. Roosevelt in 1933 and completed by R. M. Nixon in 1977). Earlier silver bullion generally took the form of ingots, usually stamped with the producer's name or logo, the mass of the ingot in troy ounces, and the fineness. Aside from certain attractive logos, these ingots had no artistic significance. They were convenient ways to preserve and accumulate silver, and were purchased as stores of wealth and as hedges against inflation. Stacks of these ingots reflected the values of a capitalistic society but were artistically inert and had little cultural value beyond their intrinsic economic significance.

When the government discontinued the use of silver in circulating coinage, large quantities of silver became available for other purposes, coinciding with a demand for this metal by people who wanted to hold silver against inflation or as a metallic investment. Thus were born "art bars" and "silver rounds," usually one troy ounce but sometimes larger, and usually 0.999 fine but sometimes less (as in sterling which is 0.925 fine). Art bars are typically 2″ × 1.25″; silver rounds are typically 1.625″ in diameter, comparable to the size of the traditional silver dollars which were discontinued after 1935 except for commemorative issues that are generally referred to as "non-circulating legal tender." Variation in these dimensions occurs, but most modern bars and rounds are one troy ounce of 0.999 fine silver.

Over 100 North American manufacturers of the art bars are listed by Rood (1991) and at least that many are known as purveyors of silver rounds. Not surprisingly, reptiles and amphibians occur on some of these items. Other themes include airplanes, automobiles, birds, birthdays, cartoon characters, celebrities, fraternal organizations, guns, holidays, locomotives, mammals, paintings and artists, presidents, religion, scenes of America, ships, sports, and states. This range of topics is truly enormous, as is the range on coins; yet we must keep in mind that coinage has existed for more than 2500 years, whereas art bars have existed for less than 50 years. Hence, the development of this new artistic genre has been explosive, probably motivated by the increased availability of silver and the desire on the part of miners, refiners, and mints to create a market.

Many of the same themes present in xeroxlore (see Preston 1974, 1995) have appeared on art bars, including pornography, indicating that both media represent folk communication (= popular, clever, humorous as well as vulgar communication) and that both media offer opportunities for creativity; these factors probably explain the explosive growth of both media in socially appropriate and in transgressive directions. Further,

Table 1. Inventory of silver art bars bearing herpetological devices.

Mint name	Rood catalogue #	Herp depicted
American Pacific Mint	APM-31	Snake
Bluegrass Mint	BGM-3	Alligator
Columbia Mint	TCM-12	Snake
Columbia Mint	TCM-12G	Snake
Gem Silver & Sales	GEM-4	Dragons
Gem Silver & Sales	GEM-4V	Dragons
Hamilton Mint	HAM-134	Turtle, Frog
Hamilton Mint	HAM-134G	Turtle, Frog
Hamilton Mint	HAM-295	Rattlesnake
Hamilton Mint	HAM-295G	Rattlesnake
Hamilton Mint	HAM-305	Green Sea Turtle
Hamilton Mint	HAM-305G	Green Sea Turtle
Hamilton Mint	HAM-310	Alligator
Hamilton Mint	HAM-310G	Alligator
Hamilton Mint	HAM-313	Frog
Hamilton Mint	HAM-313G	Frog
Hamilton Mint	HAM-315	Salamander
Hamilton Mint	HAM-315G	Salamander
Silver Mint	TSM 93	Rattlesnake
Silver Mint	TSM 93G	Rattlesnake
Silver Mint	TSM 99	Rattlesnake
Silver Mint	TSM 99G	Rattlesnake
The Silver Mine	SM 30	Tyrannosaurus
The Silver Mine	SM 31	Stegosaurus
The Silver Mine	SM 32	Brontosaurus
The Silver Mine	SM 34	Triceratops
The Silver Mine	SM 38	Dragon
U.S. Silver Corp	USSC 179	Green Sea Turtle
U.S. Silver Corp	USSC 202	Snake

G indicates gold plated silver
V indicates a variant; for GEM-4V, the variant is 4 troy ounce bar, as opposed to the ordinary 1 ounce size.

the diversity of themes within folk communication offers an exciting opportunity for those attempting the commodification of silver. Each message or artistic representation results in a "different" art bar. Thus, the psychology of commodification might encourage greater consumption (i.e., collecting and accumulation) than would plain ingots; and we suspect this is part of the underlying logic of production. In any case, we wondered about the role of herpetozoans in this exciting branch of exonumia, and to this end we surveyed the frequency of herp images in the art bars catalogued by Rood (1991). A total of 29 bars bearing herps were discovered (see Table 1). In most cases the herp was the principal or exclusive device on the bar.

One unsurprising exception was the well known snake-in-

Figure 1. "Springtime" by Norman Rockwell appeared on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, April 16, 1927. In 1974-76 the Hamilton Mint issued silver bars containing images of 12 *SEP* covers by Rockwell as well as other portraits by this artist.

the-grip-of-an-eagle that is the national symbol of Mexico (APM-31; USSC-202). Another exception was the use by Norman Rockwell of a turtle and a frog to connote springtime (HAM-134 and 134G). Rockwell's paintings, especially his covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*, have been favorite themes on art bars (Figure 1). Because of the more-or-less obvious symbolic potential of various amphibians and reptiles, it is perhaps surprising that they have not been used more frequently in this way. The ouroboros appears in TCM-12 and 12G, and the "don't tread on me" rattlesnake appears on the Continental Navy Jack flag (TSM 93 and 93G) and on the equally famous Culpeper Minutemen flag (TSM 99 and 99G). No other art bars depict symbolic herps, not even in the form of a caduceus or a staff of Aesculapius (Chiszar and Smith, 1998, 2005), probably portending inevitable developments in this genre.

In our opinion, the most spectacular herpetological art bars are those shown in Figure 2 issued in 1987 (SM 30, 31, 32, & 34). This dinosaur theme will almost certainly see greater exploitation, even if the Jurassic Park craze has run its course, partly because the images are artistically commanding and partly because they have an enduring appeal that transcends the sensationalism of the movies. Indeed, we are surprised that more dinosaur art bars do not exist already.

Although the present article is about rectangular art bars, we ought to say a few words about silver rounds, as they are

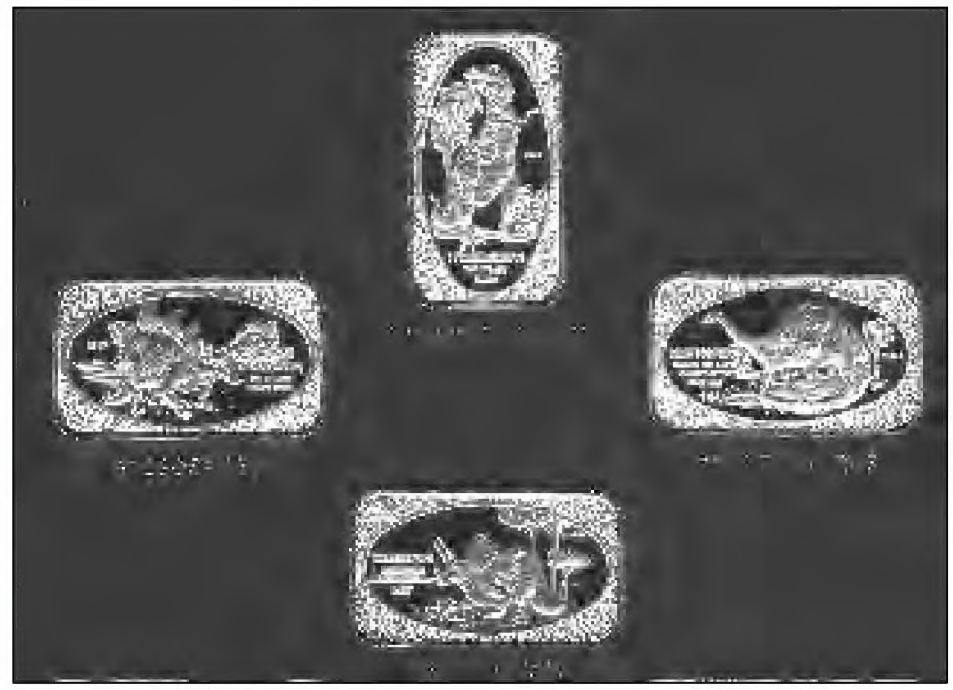

Figure 2. The Silver Mine issued this set of four dinosaur bars: Tyrannosaurus, Brontosaurus (sic), Triceratops and Stegosaurus. The set was issued in a limited edition of 500, a strategy to encourage sales based on the presumption that value will increase after the edition is sold out. Curiously, however, Rood (1991) tells us that the individual bars were also issued separately in mintages of 200.

quite popular and more diverse than are art bars. As Figures 3–5 reveal, herp images appear on rounds, making them worthy of study as herpetological collectibles. Unfortunately no catalogue has yet appeared for rounds, so we must collect them in the dark, so to speak. Nevertheless, the exercise can be rewarding, perhaps the more so since there is no telling the treasures out there to be discovered. Enthusiasts must keep in mind, however, that many bars and rounds were melted for their silver content, particularly during the inflationary period of the late 1970s and early 1980s when silver prices reached extremely high levels. Older readers will also remember the Hunt brothers' attempt to "corner" the silver market, which—together with inflation—drove the price of silver from $4 per troy ounce to $50. This prompted folks to sell silver, including art bars and rounds, so that lots of silver art went into melting pots. Therefore, knowing that a particular bar or round was created does not necessarily mean that specimens remain avail-

Figure 3. Silver round containing an image of Allosaurus.

Figure 4. Silver round containing an image of Stegosaurus. The reverse of both this round and the one in Figure 3 contains information about the respective dinosaurs and usual weight and fineness statement: "one troy ounce .999 fine silver."

able. Help can be had through the International Association of Silver Art Collectors and its newsletter, *The Silver Bugle*. (write to I.A.S.A.C., P.O. Box 28415, Seattle, WA 98118)

Rood (1991) restricted his inventory to bars of .999 fine

Figure 5. A caduceus. The reverse contains a human skull. These rounds offered by Silver Towne are sometimes purchased in large quantities as "give-away-tokens" by pharmaceutical or other medically-related companies. Some mints invite customers to design their own rounds and will then create dies to "strike to order."

silver, excluding sterling silver (.925 fine) and bars of lesser fineness or of base metals. This means that Franklin Mint products were not covered by Rood, as these silver bars and rounds were almost invariably .925 fine, and some were of copper. Interested readers can consult Darrow (1972) for information about the Franklin Mint.

Whether we approach silver bars and rounds as art objects or as commodified bullion, herpetological devices contribute to their attractiveness as well as to their ability to evoke aesthetic and emotional responses in beholders. These psychological consequences of the images are no less interesting than the images themselves, and they probably explain why we write articles like this and why you are willing to read them.

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Herpetology 2007

In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader's awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

RED-EARED INVADERS

N. Pérez-Santigosa et al. [2006, Revista Española de Herpetología 20:5-16] captured 197 and 227 individuals of *Trachemys scripta elegans* from two lagoons in Huelva, in southwestern Spain, between 2000 and 2005. Both lagoons are also inhabited by two native species, *Mauremys leprosa* and *Emys orbicularis*. Sex-ratio was even in one of the exotic species populations while females outnumbered males in the other. Sexual dimorphism was found with females reaching larger body size (mean carapace length = 211.5 mm and mean body mass = 1422.4 g) than males (mean carapace length = 169.6 mm and mean body mass = 670.7 g). The largest individual was a female of 257 mm carapace length and 2700 g body mass. The oldest individuals (age recorded by skeletochronology) were a 9-year-old female in one locality, and a 10-year-old female in the other. The 2003 age distribution was mostly composed of individuals of age classes 3–5 years. Successful reproduction was confirmed through the presence of 1- to 3-year-old individuals in the lagoons, as well as by the observation of a large number of nests and by the emergence of hatchlings from field incubated nests. Exotic turtles were active from February through November, showing maximum activity in summer and early autumn. Based on the age structure of these populations and the first observations of exotic turtles in these two lagoons, the authors believe that these naturalized populations originated with the release of pet turtles approximately in 1995, or even earlier. In both study sites, the population size of the exotic species was larger than 200 turtles after about 10 years. Exotic turtles outnumbered autochthonous species in one of these localities.

DO FLAT LIZARDS SOCIALIZE?

L. Schutz et al. [2007, J. Herpetology 41(3):354-359] note that aggregations are a common feature of many species although for most taxa, the mechanisms underlying these aggregations are poorly understood. The Augrabies flat lizard (*Platysaurus broadleyi*) is a sexually dimorphic lizard that experiences intense conflict as a result of sexual selection. In the wild, *P. broadleyi* share communal crevices and aggregate in the presence of large insect plumes. The authors experimentally tested whether lizards aggregate as a result of social factors, and also whether aggregative behavior differed between the sexes and depends on density. No evidence was found that Augrabies flat lizards preferentially group for social reasons in the absence of resources or thermoregulatory benefits. This was true for both sexes and at both densities (two-lizard and four-lizard trials). Although social factors did not promote grouping, males sheltered alone significantly more often than expected by chance, suggesting that males actively avoid one another. Therefore, social factors may work to promote social isolation rather than aggregation, under certain circumstances.

PLETHODONTIDS IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

C. D. Camp and J. B. Jensen [2007, Copeia 2007(3):594-604] studied the use of six caves by metamorphosed plethodontid salamanders from 2000–2005 in the Cumberland Plateau of northwestern Georgia. Nine species were observed, the most abundant being, in descending order, *Eurycea lucifuga*, *Plethodon glutinosus*, *P. petraeus*, and *E. longicauda*. *Eurycea lucifuga* and *P. glutinosus* were the only species observed in all six caves. Salamanders used caves seasonally, and all four species were more abundant within caves during seasons with warm, long days. A parsimonious explanation for the observed seasonal pattern of cave use is that salamanders use both cave and surface habitats, moving into caves to avoid hot, dry conditions on the surface. *Eurycea lucifuga* was most abundant in low-elevation, cold caves. The abundance of *P. glutinosus* was positively related to cave dimension and secondarily to wall heterogeneity. Species richness was not randomly distributed among caves, but neither was it consistently related to particular variables. Caves into which salamanders crowd during certain seasons represent ideal situations for the testing of hypotheses related to species interactions, both within and among species.

TEMPERATURE VS SPEED IN BROWN SNAKES

G. W. Gerald and D. L. Claussen [2007, Copeia 2007(3): 577-585] note that snakes are capable of moving in one of several ways depending on the substrate and medium being traversed. The locomotor velocities of neonate brown snakes (*Storeria dekayi*) during two modes of terrestrial locomotion (lateral undulation and concertina) and swimming were assessed at 10, 20 and 30°C. At all three temperatures, the fastest velocities were recorded during swimming while the slowest were recorded during concertina locomotion. Velocities of all three modes increased significantly with temperature but Q_{10} values differed greatly among locomotor modes indicating that the influence of temperature on velocity was mode dependent. Body length of neonates had no significant influence on velocities attained via any locomotor mode at any temperature. Neonate snakes displayed similar, but slightly lower, body length–relative velocities of terrestrial undulation and swimming compared to other snake species tested at the same temperatures. Previous studies have suggested that a trade-off exists between adaptations for aquatic and terrestrial locomotion in snakes, thereby suggesting that individuals that are fast swimmers will be slower on land and vice versa. In contrast to this prediction, significant positive correlations were detected between terrestrial and aquatic lateral undulation at 30°C, meaning that individuals that crawled faster via undulation on land were also faster swimmers. Future studies should relate performance via different modes of limbless locomotion to the actual use of these modes in nature.

SURVIVAL RATES OF TIMBER RATTLESNAKES

W. S. Brown et al. [2007, Copeia 2007(3):656-671] conducted a mark–recapture study of *Crotalus horridus* from 1978 to 2002 in northeastern New York near the northern limits of the species' range. These authors marked 588 neonates and estimated annual age-, sex-, and morph-specific recapture and survival rates using the Cormack-Jolly-Seber (CJS) model. Wild-caught neonates (field-born, n = 407) and neonates produced by captive-held gravid females (lab-born, n = 181) allowed comparison of the birthplace, or lab treatment effect, in estimated survival. Recapture rates declined from about 10–20% over time while increasing from young to older age classes. Estimated survival rates (S ± 1 SE) in the first year were significantly higher among field-born (black morph: S = 0.773 ± 0.203; yellow morph: S = 0.531 ± 0.104) than among lab-born snakes (black morph: S = 0.411 ± 0.131; yellow morph: S = 0.301 ± 0.081). Lower birth weights combined with a lack of field exposure until release apparently contributed to the lower survival rate of lab-born snakes. Subsequent survival estimates for 2–4-yr-old snakes were S = 0.845 ± 0.084 for the black morph and S = 0.999 (SE not available) for the yellow morph, and for 5-yr-old snakes S = 0.958 ± 0.039 (black morph) and S = 0.822 ± 0.034 (yellow morph). The most parsimonious model overall contained an independent time trend for survival of each age, morph, and lab-treatment group. For snakes of the first two age groups (ages 1 yr and 2–4 yr), survival tended to decline over the years for both morphs, while for adult snakes (5 yr and older), survival was constant or even slightly increased. These data on survival and recapture are among the first rigorous estimates of these parameters in a rattlesnake and among the few yet available for any viperid snake. These data are useful for analyses of the life-history strategy, population dynamics, and conservation of this long-lived snake.

MATE ACQUISITION BY MALE MASSASAUGAS

B. C. Jellen et al. [2007, J. Herpetology 41(3):451-457] note that knowledge of mating system characteristics can elucidate forces driving sexual selection. In male pitvipers, both male movement tactics and body size are predicted to be important determinants of reproductive success. The authors used radio telemetry to monitor free-ranging *Sistrurus catenatus* (eastern massasaugas) from 2000 through 2002 to determine whether male movement tactics and body size affect mate acquisition. Reproductive behaviors peaked in late July to early August. Females were accompanied by multiple males per season (up to seven); however, male mate acquisition varied considerably; only three of 17 males (18%) located more than one female during a single mating season. During the mating season, male mean daily distance moved (21.8 m) and movement frequency (77%) were higher than during the nonmating season (13.3 m, 63%). Male movement rate and body mass were positively related to the number of females acquired, and heavier males were observed accompanying females as the mating season progressed. These results indicate that both movement tactics and body size are important in the mating system of *S. catenatus*; however, direct measures of reproductive success will be necessary before assessing the intensity of sexual selection.

CRICKET FROG TRADE-OFFS

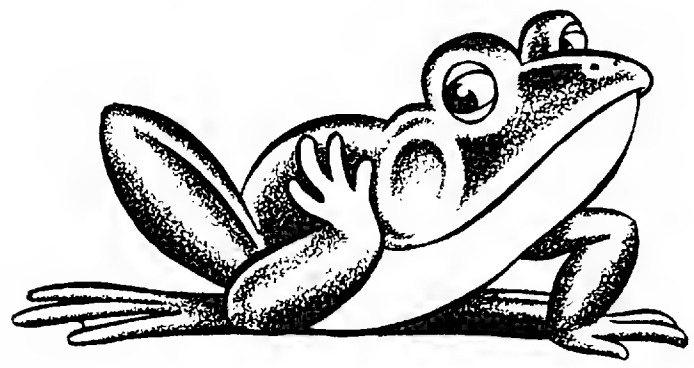
M. L. McCallum and S. E. Trauth [2007, Herpetologica 63(3): 269-274] note that investigations of natural history trade-offs between reproduction and immunity are common throughout the literature. Most previous studies of such trade-offs have focused on how resources can be drawn from immune response to fuel reproduction. The authors' results demonstrate that resources also can be shifted from reproduction to immunity. Immunologically-challenged male northern cricket frogs (*Acris crepitans*) expressed reduced investment in reproduction. Spermatic cyst diameter, germinal epithelium depth, and gonadosomatic index were smaller in antigen-injected males relative to those injected with a sham (saline injected) and noninjected control animals. Although body size increased in all groups during this study, linear growth and body mass did not appear to be significantly different among the three treatment groups. These results demonstrate indirectly that in *A. crepitans* immune response may increase metabolic demand for resources and fuel that need from the stores normally used to support male reproduction. The authors speculate that anything eliciting an immune response in this species may reduce male fertility, so pathogens and toxins at levels that are currently believed to be relatively harmless may impact populations in ways that could not be predicted previously.

EFFECTS OF HANDLING GOPHER TORTOISES

P. F. Kahn et al. [2007, Copeia 2007(3):614-621] note that researchers often must capture or trap and physically handle wild animal species to obtain basic morphometric, physiological or health data. Although these activities affect glucocorticoid levels in many species, few studies have been conducted to determine if they induce changes in animals' subsequent behavior. This is of particular concern to researchers who study gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*), a threatened species often subjected to trapping and prolonged handling. Therefore, a study was conducted to determine if protocols requiring trapping, handling, blood sampling, injections with innocuous substances, nasal lavages, and temporary captivity affect gopher tortoises as indicated by changes in their plasma corticosterone levels, movement patterns, burrow usage, and home ranges. These parameters were examined four weeks prior to and four weeks following implementation of the manipulation protocols (experimental group) or a control date (control group). There was no effect found resulting from implementation of the protocol on tortoises' plasma corticosterone levels or movement patterns, including mean distance per move, mean number of days between moves, mean number of burrows used, and home range. The only significant finding was that tortoises in the experimental group showed an increase in the number of times they moved to other burrows from pre- to post-manipulation. However, the slight increase in the number of moves occurred during a time in the season when other studies have also documented increases in movement. The increase in number of moves did not change the actual number of burrows used or home range. The authors conclude that the use of mildly invasive protocols involving short-term procedures and temporary handling do not significantly affect the subsequent corticosterone levels or daily movement patterns of gopher tortoises.

The Tympanum

Comments on William Montgomery's defense of using tongs to handle snakes [Bull. Chicago Herp. Soc. 42(9):136]



The position taken by Montgomery was that to use tongs to grab snakes is acceptable. The bulk of his letter was then giving his version as to how to handle snakes with tongs without injuring them. Not being present on the occasions that he's handled snakes with tongs, a reader, including myself can only hope he is correct in claiming never to have injured a snake when doing so.

However I'd be very surprised if someone like him would admit in a journal such as *Bull. CHS* that a snake had died as a result of him mishandling one with tongs. It's a bit like a snake keeper admitting it was their fault a reptile died in their collection as a result of error on their part, but any practicing reptile veterinarian will tell you that this is in fact commonplace.

However, my original arguments included that injuries may be internal and therefore overlooked by a handler such as Montgomery. Nothing in his defense of tongs gets over this hurdle, unless Montgomery can claim and substantiate that every snake he's "tonged" has been x-rayed and inspected post "tonging." There are too many ifs, buts and maybes in terms of his "right way" to handle snakes with tongs for my satisfaction. If a snake struggles intensely, as is common for "tonged" wild snakes, the ifs go out the door and the snake ends up injured.

In agreement with Montgomery, he says that any tool can cause damage to a snake if used incorrectly. One such example is seen on the internet at www.snakehandler.com.au (downloadable as of 15 Oct 2007) where a novice snake handler has shredded the neck scales of a Red-bellied Black Snake (see photo) from excessive force with a pinning stick or similar.

The final comment by Montgomery is however offensive. He wrote: "I have read Hoser's articles with interest and since mostof them have dealt with subjects I am not familiar with, I haven't had an opinion about them one way or other. But his blatantly false statements regarding snake handling give me reason to question credibility on everything he has written."

However, Montgomery has failed to identify anything in my original letter that was false or inaccurate. Hence it is himself making a misleading statement. At best he can merely state that his opinion on the use of tongs to grab snakes is different to mine. **Raymond Hoser, 488 Park Road, Park Orchards, Victoria, 3114, Australia. adder@smuggled.com**

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Unofficial Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, October 19, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 P.M. at the home of Steve and Amy Sullivan. Board members Josh Chernoff, Rich Crowley and Erik Williams were absent.

Officers' Reports

Recording Secretary: Minutes (taken kindly by Cindy Rampacek) were read, minor corrections were made, and they were accepted.

Treasurer: Income and expenses were discussed and the treasurer's report was accepted.

Membership Secretary: Membership has been pretty stable.

Vice-president: We will have the Herp Christmas Party again this December; it will be the day after Christmas and everyone is welcome to bring food! Jason and Steve have started planning for next year and it looks like we'll be getting Zoltan Takacs in January, John Murphy in February, Bryan Suson in March, and Bill Love in April.

Corresponding Secretary: Cindy said that it's been fairly quiet this month. The Yahoo! Group has been very busy, but the forums need some more activity!

Publications Secretary: Erik was not present, but had spoken to Linda about getting CHS meeting info cards made.

Sergeant-at-arms: There were 52 people at the September 26 meeting.

Committee Reports

Shows:

- There will be a first time pet owners show through the Will County Forest Preserve District on December 1 in Joliet; Deb Krohn will be representing the CHS.
- Aaron LaForge will represent the CHS at the South East Wisconsin Exotic Reptile Festival (SEWERFest) in Racine, Wisconsin, on November 25.
- There'll be a show at the Garfield Park Conservatory on October 27.
- Snake Day at the Milwaukee Public Museum will be Saturday, November 10, 2007.
- The December Peggy Notebaert shows will be on the 1st, 2nd, and 27th. Contact Jenny Vollman about attending.
- The Great Lakes Pet Expo will be on February 2, 2008. Contact Cindy Rampacek for further information.

Nominating Committee: Everyone has been slated; there are 6 people running for the 3 member-at-large positions so the November meeting should be fun.

ReptileFest: John Archer got new cards printed to replace the incorrect old ones. If anyone still has the old cards, they should be sure to replace them. There was discussion about who will be able to attend and doesn't have conflicts for ReptileFest '08. Vet prospects are looking good. It was mentioned that it's a good idea to send letters before calling people about attending 'Fest.

Library: Steve Sullivan bought some crates to store extra books; he's looking after what we have. He will also work on going through and calling people with long-overdue books.

General Meetings: Getting interesting/funny videos from CHS members is a good option for the shorts. Jason will do a "Forum 101" short introducing the attendees to our CHS forum and how to use it. There will be a Halloween-colored herp theme for October.

Old Business

The vet list will be posted on the website/forum soon.

Roundtable discussions and a possible photo contest were suggested for the Holiday Herp Party.

"Spot" mail orders should be better advertised.

The Esther Lewis memorial plaque was brought up again. Steve is working on it.

The massasauga conservation slogan was discussed. Jason offered to write an e-mail to sort it out.

New Business

The "I love my reptile" magnets were very popular at Tinley; they sold out. Jason Hood made a motion to order 50 "I love my reptile" and 25 "I love my turtle" magnets. Mike Dloogatch seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Round Table

Linda showed the attendees the flyer from the Peggy Notebaert reptile exhibit that is doing cross-advertisement with the CHS.

Jason reminded us that it is important to have an e-mail sign-up sheet for visitors at shows.

The next board meeting will be held at the residence of Deb Krohn.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Kira Geselowitz.

ReptileFest 2008 will be canceled

unless you exhibit.

It's not the signs, the trees, the tablecloths, or the photo booth that attract people.

IT'S THE ANIMALS!

Without yours we have none.

April 12 & 13, 2008.
Be there.

Another New Book to Celebrate SSAR's 50th Anniversary

THE LIVES OF CAPTIVE REPTILES

by Hans-Günter Petzold

Translated by Lucian Heichler and Edited by James B. Murphy

This book, originally published in German, is **a recognized classic on the biology of captive reptiles** (and selected amphibians). In it, the author carefully summarizes an enormous body of information—both his own extensive experience at Tierpark Berlin and a vast literature—much of which has been little known outside the German-speaking world. He synthesizes studies from captive and wild animals and discusses and interprets them in terms of contemporary physiology, ethology, and reproductive biology. Petzold reviews papers in biological, herpetological, zoo, and terrarium journals published throughout the world, including eastern Europe, Russia, and China, and he champions the role played by amateur terrarists in making studies of general importance. He shows how data derived from captive reptiles can lead to discoveries of importance to ethology, reproductive biology, systematics, and veterinary management. **This book will be of value to academics, zoo personnel, veterinarians, amateur terrarists, and conservationists interested in the maintenance, reproduction, and observation of reptiles in captivity.**

Hans-Günter Petzold, late Curator of Reptiles and Deputy Director of the Tierpark Berlin, one of the world's great zoos, was a leading expert on the biology of captive amphibians and reptiles and author of about 350 papers and five books on captive animals. He was trained at the University of Leipzig in systematics, ecology, and animal behavior, where he received his doctorate in 1960, and has conducted field research on reptiles overseas, including Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam. In this book, Petzold has marshalled this breadth of experience to make insightful connections among diverse studies and to point out fruitful areas for future research. This English edition has been professionally translated by **Lucian Heichler**, who for more than 30 years served in the foreign service of the U.S. Department of State, and has been thoroughly edited by **James B. Murphy**, former Curator of Reptiles at the Dallas Zoo and now Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C. The German edition was not illustrated, but this edition has been augmented by the staff of Tierpark Berlin with **60 photographs (57 in color)**.

Topics covered include aspects of **reproduction** (sexual dimorphism, age at maturity, sex recognition and attraction, courtship behavior, copulation, gestation and delayed fertilization, egg-laying, birth, reproductive cycles, parental care, data on eggs and clutches, incubation time, genetic questions), **development** (growth, coloration and markings, regeneration, skin shedding, longevity), and **nutrition** (search for and ingestion of food, digestion, excretion, defecation, pellet formation, gastroliths, keratophagy, cannibalism). There are also discussions of the origin and **history of zoos**, the relevance of **terrarium observations**, and species **conservation programs** in zoos and private terraria. The literature cited section includes 1200 titles and there is an index to genera and species.

Specifications: 300 pages (7 × 10 inches or 18 × 25.5 cm), hard cover, 60 photos (57 color), index. ISBN 978–0–916984–73–1. To be published March 2008. • **Regular Price**: $55. • **Special Price to SSAR Members** (if ordered *before July 2008*): $45. • **Shipping Costs:** USA address, add $4; non-USA add $11. • **Orders to:** SSAR Publications Secretary, P.O. Box 58517, Salt Lake City, Utah 84158–0517, USA (*telephone and fax*: 801–562–2660; *e-mail*: ssar@herplit.com). • **Payment:** Make checks payable to "SSAR." Non-USA orders must be paid in USA funds using a check drawn on a USA bank or by International Money Order. Books may be charged to American Express, Discover, MasterCard, or Visa (please give account number and expiration date). • **SSAR Membership and Other Publications:** Membership information and a complete list of society publications can be obtained from the Publications Secretary at the addresses given above or at www.ssarherps.org.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, November 28, at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Cannon Drive and Fullerton Parkway, in Chicago. This meeting will include the annual election of officers and members-at-large of the CHS Board of Directors. Also at this meeting **Rob Carmichael**, of the Wildlife Discovery Center, Elawa Farm, in Lake Forest, will report on the foxsnake research he has been doing. **And as a special bonus, beginning at 6:00 P.M., CHS members will be able to view "Reptiles—The Beautiful and the Deadly,"** the exhibit of live turtles, crocodilians, lizards and snakes now being featured at the Notebaert Nature Museum.

The December 26 meeting will be a holiday party. The CHS will provide soft drinks and snacks. If you would like to bring something edible to share with the group, you are invited to do so. If you would like to bring an animal to show off to the group, you are encouraged to do that as well. This will be a chance to socialize all evening and get to know your fellow members a little better.

The regular monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society take place at Chicago's newest museum — the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**. This beautiful new building is at Fullerton Parkway and Cannon Drive, directly across Fullerton from the Lincoln Park Zoo. Meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month, from 7:30 P.M. through 9:30 P.M. Parking is free on Cannon Drive. A plethora of CTA buses stop nearby.

Board of Directors Meeting
Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? If so, mark your calendar for the next board meeting, to be held December 14. For information as to where the meeting will be held and directions, call Mike Dloogatch evenings at (773) 588-0728.

The Chicago Turtle Club
The monthly meetings of the Chicago Turtle Club are informal; questions, children and animals are welcome. Meetings normally take place at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. Parking is free. For more info visit the CTC website: http://www.geocities.com/~chicagoturtle.

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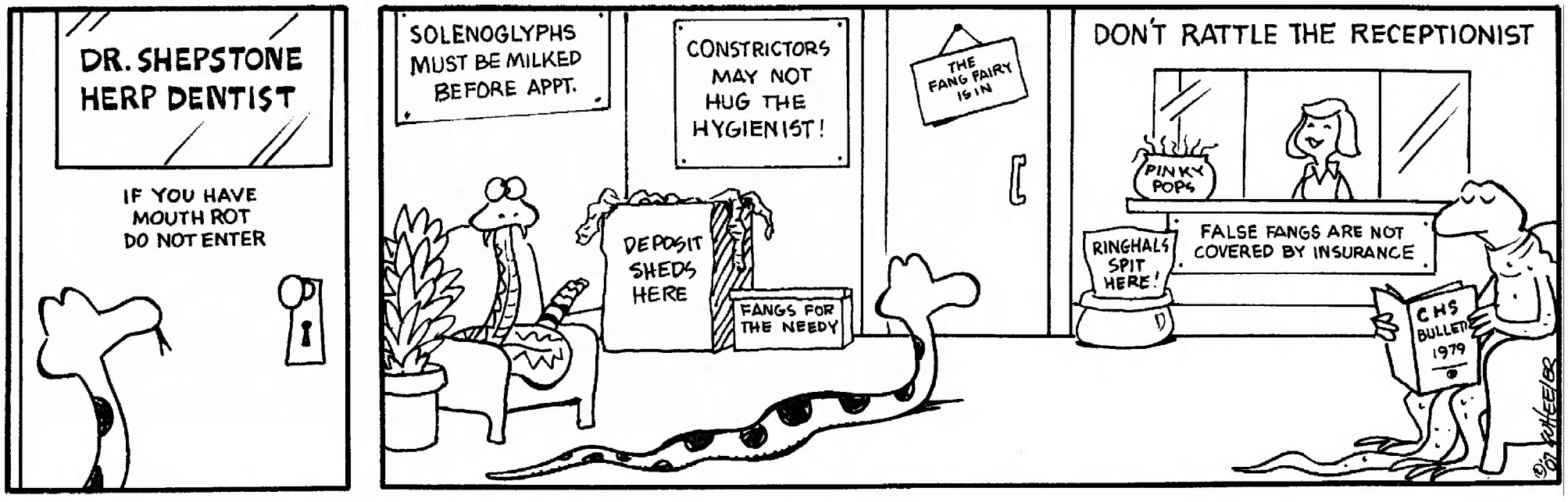

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